cheer him by suggesting that the honour of being the first subject of the king of Italy who had reached the summit of the Viso, and passed a night on it into the bargain, lasting for his life and rendering him famous to generations of Bobbioites yet unborn, would amply atone for a few short hours of exposure. Besides, it would recommend him to future travellers, who might take him as guide on the strength of this performance. I found, however, that all my eloquence was wasted, and that he would have sacrificed the brilliant future portrayed had it been in his power to escape. Thus time went on, and sometimes we dozed, and sometimes we peered out into the mist to see if there were any signs of its disappearing; but at length, about 5.15, there being no appearance of improvement, our little encampment was broken up, a hasty breakfast taken, and the barometer observed and put up in a very rusty condition from its long exposure to the damp. At six, despairing of any opportunity for using the theodolite, which had been dragged up with considerable trouble, we set out on our return.

As we descended the snow gradually diminished, then ceased altogether, and at last we emerged from the cloud which hung densely round the upper portion of the mountain and clung to it throughout the day. The fresh-fallen snow rendered caution necessary, and our progress was slow, but at 7.45, we reached the foot of the steepest portion of the descent, about half an hour above the tarns already described, and halting till 8.15 for breakfast, arrived at the châlets in about two hours more, or at 10.15. The time occupied in the ascent and descent was therefore 7¼ and 4¼ hours respectively, including halts, which amounted to an hour and a half in the first case, and half an hour in the second. At 2.30, we proceeded down the Vallon di Vallante to Ponte Castello, whence a pleasant walk of little more than an hour towards the head of the Val Vraita brought us at 4.45, to La Chianale, thus terminating a most interesting expedition.

Ascent of the Dent Blanche. By Thos. S. Kennedy.

On Wednesday, July 9, 1862, I started from Zermatt, with Peter Taugwalder and his son, a lad of eighteen, as guides, to try the Dent Blanche. We crossed the Col d'Erin to Abricolla, and were there detained two days by bad weather.

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On Saturday the morning broke gloriously, and we started early, following a route we had traced out during our descent from the Col d'Erin. Soon, however, after entering upon the glacier, we agreed to try and climb straight up a precipice, towards the Dent Blanche, so as to reach the main ridge more directly. As I afterwards saw, this route, besides involving a loss of time and some extra labour, was fraught with some little danger. Stones and masses of ice tumble occasionally over the cliffs from a secondary glacier above, but happily we got up without mishap. After some difficult climbing among the steep and ice-covered rocks, we reached the top of the cliffs, and found ourselves on the edge of a large circular basin, of which the Dent Blanche formed the opposite side, and we had to begin by going directly away from our mountain, so as to get round the edge of this basin. Then we went directly up the great snow-ridge, whose lowest point is the Col d'Erin, and which is one of the long ridges whose union forms the Dent Blanche.

We halted to breakfast in a queer little nook, suspended far above the head of the Zmutt glacier, and there left our baggage. The snow was soft, so that at a very early hour we had been wading knee-deep, and the long slopes were not very safe to venture upon. However, the day was so fine that I felt sure of the ascent; but soon difficulties began to thicken. Great castles of shattered rock sprang directly out of the ridge, over which we had to climb, an operation often akin to a feat of rope-walking. At the base of one of these I sheltered myself in a little cranny from the wind, and tying the end of a long rope to old Peter's waist, bade him go up and see what he could make of it. After paying out fifty or sixty feet, I heard him clattering down, and was surprised to see the weather-beaten old fellow with a face as white as that of a frightened girl. He seized eagerly upon some spirits of wine we chanced to have, and then told me that when on the top of the rock his foot had slipped, and that for a moment he had thought himself done for. His nerve being entirely destroyed by the fright, I fixed the rope round my own waist, and led the way upwards. But presently his courage failed again—he declared that he could not follow, and the son sided with his father; so, it being useless to think of ascending alone, I was obliged to yield. It was then 1 P.M., and, as it afterwards proved, we were less than an hour from the top. We took up our traps in passing, and essayed to descend the precipice. But although we had taken the precaution of making a little pile of stones in every convenient place, we could hardly get down. However,

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after many windings and doublings, we arrived at the bottom. It was then nearly 4 P.M., and we were at the foot of the glacier; but, wishing to be in Zermatt on Sunday, I proposed to cross the pass at once. We waded up through the deep snow to the Col d'Erin, which we reached at 5.30 P.M. A few steps were cut, and we tumbled rather than climbed down the little ice-slope on to the Zmutt glacier. Turning the few crevasses, we raced down the rocks of the Stockhi, and along the Zmutt glacier; and, after a few minutes' halt at the châlets for a draught of milk, hastened onwards. At 8 P.M. we arrived in Zermatt, hungry, as may be imagined, and old Peter quite blown and distressed with the speed at which we had come.

The expedition had been rather an unsatisfactory one, and I was not sorry, finding in Zermatt on the Sunday two gentlemen, the Messrs. Wigram, eager for the ascent, to agree with them for a start the next morning, to try the mountain again. Jean Baptiste Croz was this time our guide, and a lad, one of the Kronigs, was engaged as porter. A numerous party on their way to Valpelline accompanied us to the head of the pass, whence we went down to Abricolla. The next three days, which were stormy, we spent at Evolena; but on Thursday night the sky began to lighten, so we returned to Abricolla, where we found that our two men had made a short reconnaissance in order to discover the easiest method of reaching the main ridge.

At 2 A.M. on Friday, July 18, the peasant entered our chamber to wake us. We consumed our breakfast, and then stood some time at the entrance to discuss the propriety of starting. The air was perfectly calm, and the stars shone out clearly and with that peculiar brightness only to be seen in the pure atmosphere of the Alps; but light streaky mists were gathering over the Col d'Erin, and hung on the Dent Blanche; and, even as we watched, they drew themselves into those long fine lines of white which indicate to the mountaineer's eye the presence of wind in the regions above. I did not much like these appearances—Croz said he would give no opinion either way; at last we determined to start, knowing, nevertheless, that there would be cold work to encounter on the peak. As we crossed the grassy mountain side to the glacier, I watched the Dent Blanche closely, and once saw the snow whirled aloft in a cloud from off the summit, and then blown away swiftly to the right. Appearances were against us, for a strong north wind was evidently setting in. Croz, too, was unwell; his answers to me were of the shortest, and his manner of going to work by no means indicated much

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hope that we should succeed. C. Wigram and I were also poorly; we had been drinking at breakfast tea made from water charged with the finely-divided mud of the glaciers, and our stomachs now began to rebel against this foreign introduction. Slowly we progressed up the hard-frozen glacier and snow-slopes, skirting on the left the precipices which the week before I had climbed. The tracks of our men from yesterday's reconnaissance were still visible, and we followed them as our easiest guide among the numerous crevasses, till at 7.30 we stood upon the first shoulder of the mountain.

Some little rocks jutted their black heads above the snow, and we proceeded here to disburthen ourselves of all but necessary baggage, for everything had been brought in the hope of crossing the Col d'Erin the same evening back to Zermatt. C. Wigram had for some time been complaining; the work began to tell upon his unaccustomed limbs; and, fearing lest his lagging should hinder the others, he generously resolved to await our return upon these rocks. Bidding him not attempt the descent of the glacier without us, we bade him adieu and sprang upwards. Our route lay over rough loose stones, and then up an icy slope, Kronig in front hewing the steps; soon we emerged upon a little plateau at the commencement of the arête, which I had previously attained by a different route. An indefinable weight seemed to have hung itself upon me, impeding my motions. My limbs, though I felt no fatigue, refused to work with their accustomed vigour, and I had been considerably in the rear of the party, but now the gush of pure rarefied mountain air which blew over us, and the inspiriting view of the peak of the Dent Blanche rising above, began to revive me. I closed up to the front, and led the way up the first cornice, occasionally making a few gashes in the hard snow with my axe, for better foothold. Presently a halt was called for breakfast, and while this went on I uncoiled and arranged our rope, originally intended for a signal halliard, and 100 feet in length. Each man was provided with a strong belt, strapped above his jacket, and to these the rope was made fast at equal intervals. Poor Kronig, who had been for a moment attacked by giddiness, now came to confide his troubles to me: he wished to be allowed to stay behind, not liking the look of the work before us, but we laughed him out of his fears, and later in the day, although by no means a first-rate hand, the lad did his very best.

A great rocky castle towered above us on the ridge, and an outlying bastion rose out of the slope some twenty yards to the left. Between these, in a little couloir filled with snow, we cut

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our way upwards, moving very cautiously, for a serious slip might have endangered the lives of the whole party; for the mountain side sloped steeply downwards to a point near where we had that morning begun to climb, nothing but a few crags jutting through the snow that could stop a falling body. After passing the castle, we turned up to the right and regained the ridge, for there, although giddy work for unaccustomed heads, the climbing was easier. Croz's long arms and legs now stood him in good stead. Stretching out one of these long members he would hook himself to some projecting cranny, and then, as he never condescended to lend a hand to his shorter comrades, I was often compelled to make a little circuit in search of some more feasible way. Once Wigram let his staff escape from his hand, fortunately it caught on a stone in the slope not many yards below, and, planting myself firmly, I let him down till he had regained it.

Mists were now gathering below, over the glaciers of Zinal and Schönbuhl; from the north also a heavy bank of clouds was driving up. The wind roared and boomed over our ridge, making fearfully wild music among the desolate crags. A smooth rock lay above us, covered with snow; it was very steep (52°), but my footmarks from the week before were still visible in the snow. Croz went up on hands and knees, sticking in his axe head for anchorage. The rest followed in like fashion, and we then crawled along the stormy and blasted ridge till the base of a second huge and tottering ruin was reached. To climb this I knew was very difficult; it was the place from which we had retreated the week before; but to-day the snow was in first-rate order, and we prepared to turn the flank of the enemy. Croz went ahead, cutting small steps for his feet to rest in. I enlarged them after him, so as to serve for our descent, and thus we divided the labour. The rocky towers above us were broken into wildly fantastic groups and suggested many an odd resemblance. But the weird and terrible predominated to our anxious eyes: it seemed as though a single thunder-clap might have shaken the whole structure to ruin; and the furious wind threatened to bring some overhanging crag on to our defenceless heads. Gradually we became enveloped in clouds, the turrets began to loom through them ominously, and soon nothing at a distance greater than fifty yards could be seen at all.

I shouted to Croz, for the wind had rendered an ordinary voice inaudible, to reascend to the arête, and we climbed vigorously up a little gully in the rock towards it. Several stones came rattling down, dislodged by the leader, and striking his

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followers severe blows, for in such a position it was almost impossible to dodge them. Another moment and we were on the ridge, and safe from these projectiles. We ascended slowly, kicking steps in the half consolidated snow. The north wind, charged with icy spiculæ, drove fiercely in our faces, and Wigram's hair, unprotected by his hat, became a mass of white icicles. A steep overhanging cornice was on our right, but this was more formidable in appearance than in reality. We calculated with the nicety of experienced men where we could safely tread. Sometimes, when the cornice was higher than our heads, we drove our alpenstocks through its weak part in order to try its condition, and could see white rolling clouds beneath through the hole. I began to calculate, with a thrill of exultation, that we ought to be nearing the top, but nothing was visible ahead. Presently Croz stopped and looked somewhat vacantly around, in a moment I was by his side, and a warm flush ran through me as I felt that we had conquered one of the giants of the Valais. The ridge ran forward on a level; we had reached the top. Still, as the clouds rolled and opened, a point six or seven feet higher appeared before us; it was merely an accumulation of snow upon one little point of the ridge, and the mass of snow between us and the little cone was so completely overhanging, that Croz gave his advice against venturing on it, and I agreed with him. The scene was awfully grand, and hardly a word was spoken as we clustered together on the sharp snowy ridge. Thick mists and driving clouds of snow swept over and past us; at one moment we could see the lower rocks and buttresses of the mountain far down in the depths around; another instant, and all was again hidden, and we seemed to be alone in the midst of chaos. Vainly we turned our eyes around, wearied by the formless glare, in search of some object on which to rest them. Downwards, to our left, were steep rocks covered with snow—not even the chamois might venture there; on our right was a seething abyss, at the bottom of which we knew lay the glaciers of Zinal and Schönbuhl, but nothing was to be seen except an indescribable wreathing in the air, like the wind made visible. It was a sight which filled the mind with the majesty of nature, and can never be forgotten.

The cold was severe; a thermometer which was held in the air had fallen to 20° Fahrenheit, when Croz accidentally broke it with his axe, and the observation was cut short incontinently. In ten minutes I turned to descend, bearing in mind the chance of frost-bites; it was 1.15 P.M. Before quitting the summit, we each secured a piece of stone as a trophy. We descended

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along the cornice, and entered again upon the rocks; and now care had to be taken, for the best man was foremost, and his less-experienced comrades above might easily have dislodged stones, and endangered his head. Croz and I proceeded to test all suspicious-looking pieces, and soon, from our united efforts, a perfect storm of projectiles was sent leaping and crashing down to the glacier. Then we descended with the utmost caution, the steps made in ascending serving to guide us. Once I placed my heel incautiously upon the snow—ice was beneath, and my foot shot from under me; Croz heard the noise, and turned like a true man to receive the shock, but before descending a yard I had arrested myself. It was our only mishap—two hours afterwards we were again ensconced in the little hole where we had breakfasted and left our provisions. A full bumper was drunk to the health of the Dent Blanche, and a roar of triumph sent down to C. Wigram on his rock below. Then we descended the snow rapidly, the mists coming down with us, and precluding all chance of getting to Zermatt that night. At 5.30 we found our friend, sitting under the lee of a great stone, and looking happier than we had a right to expect, for a more desolate position could hardly be imagined. During ten hours he had awaited us; snow-storms and fogs had passed over him, and he had begun to think we should never find him again. He had tried to descend the glacier, but the snow was soft and treacherous, and soon a crevasse had forced him to return. After a short halt we gathered up our bundles, took him on our rope, and went swiftly downwards, threading the crevasses.

Once, while pausing below the precipices of the Dent Blanche, a shower of small stones came down; most of them fell short, but one flew directly between Wigram and me, burying itself in the snow—but this was nothing to men who had succeeded. We escaped from these dangerous missiles, and ran cheerfully down the glacier, reaching the Abricolla châlet at 7 P.M. We had been sixteen hours on foot, and I think the sight of the little building was pleasant to us all. We turned into bed early, and rose the next morning at four as fresh, and perhaps stronger than if the previous day's work had been a bagatelle. I traversed the Col d'Erin in less than six hours, running ahead of my comrades, and at mid-day was kindly welcomed by friends in Zermatt.

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